

The Ackland Art Museum's Image of Śāntinātha

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A footnote may be added to John E. Cort's instructive Essay on a Digambara image of CE 1511 (*Newsletter of the Centre of Jaina Studies*, 7, 2012, 30ff.). Its inscription alludes to the lineage of a known eminent Bhaṭṭāraka Vijayakīrti of north-east Gujarat, and lists the donors' immediate family. Cort provided a transcription and translation of the inscribed text, but it seems possible to improve upon these, as regards the matter of the donors' family ties. The important initial part of the document is not in dispute:

On Monday, May 12, AD 1511 – in the Mūla Saṅgha, Sarasvatī Gaccha, Balātkāra Gaṇa, Kundakunda Anvaya, at the behest of the guru Bhaṭṭāraka Vijayakīrti, the disciple of Bhaṭṭāraka Jñānabhūṣaṇa, the disciple of Bhaṭṭāraka Bhuvanakīrti, the disciple of Bhaṭṭāraka Sakalakīrti, – Jayatā, Śreṣṭhī of the Humbaḍa caste, and his wife Rahī ...

While the subsequent details of the donors' family are of negligible demographic significance, the general principles involved in their exegesis are of some concern. The family tree of the donors has to be worked out from a much-abbreviated text; and as usual the route taken by the inscription has to be tracked as it meanders around the available spaces on the back. Basically it consists, roughly speaking, of three concentric semicircles followed by a block of six short lines at the Base. Strictly speaking, the Outer curves are in the shape of a rounded capital A; the Inner curve forms a horseshoe; and the Inmost is split into left-hand and right-hand segments. Asymmetrically placed above the Inner semicircle there is also a separate six-syllable phrase with final punctuation (‘Śreṣṭhī Bhojā's son Veṇā.’): this has the appearance of a postscript Suppletion. The inscription, excellently reproduced in the *Newsletter*, can then be read as follows:

OUTER LEFT sam° 1567varṣe vaiśākhāsudi15 some/
OUTER TOP śrīmūlasaṃghe sarasvatīgacche
balātkāragāṇe śrīkuṇḍa/
OUTER RIGHT kuṇḍācāryānvaye bha°śrīsakala/kīrttis
ta°bha°śrībhuvanakīrttis ta°/
INNER bha°śrījñānabhūṣaṇas ta°bha°śrīvijayakīrtti-
gurūpadeśāt hu°śre°jayatā bhā°rahī/
INMOST LEFT su°śre°bhojā/
INMOST RIGHT bhā°nāthī < SUPPLETION
śre°bhojāsu°veṇāll> bhrā°va/
BASE nā bhā°jāmī su°/rāṇā bhā°māṇi/ki bhrā°mākā
kī/kā śrīśāmtijinaṃ/°nitya praṇamaṃ/till

I am indebted to Samani Pratibha Pragya for eliciting the hint that what Cort renders as ‘disciple’, but opaquely transcribes as *-kīrtti sta°*, represents *-kīrttis tacchiṣya-*. In the Base, the reading Jāmī seems certain, rather than ‘Jāsī’ as in Cort. The subsequent reading Māṇiki is clear,



Twenty-four Jina icon of Śāntinātha (back with inscription)
Gujarat, dated VS 1567 = 1511 CE.
Copper alloy, 27.3 x 9 x 18.5 cm
Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill
Gift of the Rubin-Ladd Foundation. 2011.34.1

despite ‘Māṇikī’ in Cort’s transcription and the evidently inadvertent occurrences of ‘Māṇikā’ in his translation. In the penultimate line of the text, °nitya has a prefixed sign resembling the abbreviation symbol: the sign is ignored by Cort, and indeed it looks like an error which has caused the final line to overrun by one syllable (*till*), in a manner unworthy of the otherwise carefully planned layout. Adjacent *anusvāra* dots are placed well to the left of the relevant syllable, so it may be that this meaningless °nitya incorporates the missing *anusvāra* of *nitya[m]*.

The syllables that have been underlined in the transcriptions given here indicate the points at which the arrangement of lines differs from Cort’s sequence. After the *bhā°rahī* of the Inner section, he reads

INMOST RIGHT bhā°nāthī bhrā°va
INMOST LEFT su°śre°bhojā
SUPPLETION śre°bhojā su°veṇāll
BASE nā bhā°jāmī su°, etc.

Anomalously, since this document basically proceeds as usual from left to right, Cort reads the Inmost Right section before the Inmost Left section. This has involved the tacit omission (in his transcription) of the abbreviation sign attached to the /*su*^o (that according to him follows *bhrā^o va*), so as to complete a name ‘Vasu’. In fact, the alleged sequence *bhrā^o va/su^o śre^o bhojā* seems to have been read (inadvertently or deliberately?), as ‘*bhrā^o vasu su^o śre^o bhojā*’, since his translation for this reads ‘his [Jayatā’s] brother Vasu, his [Jayatā’s] son [by Nāthī] Bhojā’. (Bhojā’s epithet ‘Śreṣṭhī’ is twice omitted from the translation.) The alleged sequence has also entailed the omission (in his translation) of the subsequent /*nā* of the Base, presumably as seeming meaningless.

There is, however, no reason to assume such a sequence. The syllables of the Suppletion, which are located anomalously as an uncompleted line above the Inner semicircle (and not, as in Cort’s reading, between the contiguous Inmost semicircle and Base), are crediting Bhojā with a son Veṇā. They are thus more obviously to be placed within the Inmost right section, so that ‘Bhojā’s son Veṇā’ follows ‘his wife Nāthī’, just as ‘his son Bhojā’ would follow ‘his wife Rahī’, and as ‘his son Rāṇā’ follows ‘his wife Jāmī’. The structure, with the Suppletion in angle brackets, is then relatively clear:

Śreṣṭhī Jayatā, (his) wife Rahī, (his) son Śreṣṭhī Bhojā;
 (Śreṣṭhī Bhojā’s) wife Nāthī, <Śreṣṭhī Bhojā’s son
 Veṇā>;
 (Jayatā’s) brother Vanā, (Vanā’s) wife Jāmī, (Vanā’s) son
 Rāṇā, (Rāṇā’s) wife Mānikī;
 (Jayatā’s) brothers Mākā and Kīkā

Understandably, the Suppletion presents a complete phrase <Śreṣṭhī Bhojā’s son Veṇā> whereas, as a constituent of the original text, neither its repetition of ‘Śreṣṭhī Bhojā’ nor its concluding punctuation would be called for. That its asymmetrically placed syllables do constitute an unplanned postscript may be borne out by their compressed size: one of its abbreviation marks is a mere dot. A caret has arguably been inserted at the appropriate point: a short horizontal line is clearly marked above the *bhrā* of *bhrā^o va/nā*.

As Cort has placed the Suppletion, arbitrarily between the contiguous Inmost and Base sections, the punctuating || that follows the incomplete line is inexplicable, and the result is translatable only on the basis of several questionable assumptions about the relationships involved. His version arrives at four generations and, by reading the Inmost semicircle implausibly from right to left, he saddles the donor with two wives (*bhāryā* Rahī / *bhāryā* Nāthī), while (in his reading: *bhrā^o va/su śre^o bhojā*) no wife is assigned to his alleged brother Vasu or to his own son Bhojā. Thereupon the assumptions become somewhat arbitrary: (*śre^o bhojā*) ‘his [Jayatā’s] son [by Nāthī] Bhojā’; (*śre^o bhojā su^o veṇā*) ‘Bhojā’s son Veṇā’; (*nā bhā^o jāsī su^o rāṇā*) ‘his [Veṇā’s wife] Jāsī and son Rāṇā’; (*bhā^o mānikī bhrā^o mākā kīkā*) ‘his [Rāṇā’s] wife Mānikī; and her [Mānikī’s] brothers Mākā [and] Kīkā’. Least plausible here is surely the attribution



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of two brothers to the donor’s great-granddaughter-in-law, and no siblings to his closer female relatives. At least ‘her’ should have been bracketed along with ‘Mānikā’s’. If Mākā and Kīkā are not Mānikī’s brothers, they may be assigned to Jayatā by the same logic that would assign brother Vanā to Jayatā: as the brothers of anyone else, they would surely be described as sons rather than as brothers.

The version proposed here has at least the merit of symmetry and requires few assumptions. We would have two generations, apart from the grandson of the postscript Suppletion (denoting a recent happy event?), viz., the donor, the merchant Jayatā, his wife, his merchant son, and grandson; his brother Vanā with wife and son; and (plausibly, Jayatā’s own) two younger unmarried brothers Mākā and Kīkā. It is not clear whether Cort’s rejection of Vanā and Jāmī as readings in favour of ‘Vasu’ and ‘Jāsī’ is deliberate, based on superior onomastic knowledge. Are the apparent readings Vanā and Jāmī less probable as names than ‘Vasu’ and ‘Jāsī’?

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